

January 9, 2008

To the Surface Transportation Board and to Victoria Rutson, chief of the Section of Environmental Analysis, thank you for conducting these public meetings about this important matter. I am Karen Lambert, President of Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital, and I am also a Barrington resident. You've heard from some of Good Shepherd's physicians and staff about the serious concerns the medical community has about Canadian National's plans.

On behalf of the entire Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital, I'd like to state that we believe our Barrington communities face a very real public health and safety threat by the Canadian National Railway's (CN) proposed increase in freight train traffic on the EJ&E railroad. It seeks to run 20 to 30 freight trains – often a mile-long or more – through the heart of this community.

The roadways that provide access to the Barrington area - and to our community's hospital - are at the mercy of the numerous EJ&E grade crossings. They include routes 14 and 59, Lake-Cook, Lake Zurich, Ela, Cuba, Penny and Otis Roads. We're extremely concerned about this proposal. It threatens the safety of desperately ill or injured patients being transported to Good Shepherd by ambulance or car. The CN acknowledges that the freight trains will run between 7,000 and 10,000-feet long, creating essentially rolling, mile-long barriers between half the community and vital emergency services.

We urge you to consider the following facts in your analysis.

If a person has a heart attack in downtown Barrington, they're just 10 minutes from Good Shepherd's ER and cardiac center at a time when every minute counts. But, if their ambulance's path is blocked by a freight train, they're well over 20 minutes from Northwest Community and Sherman – the next two closest accessible hospitals offering comprehensive cardiac care. Heart disease is the number one killer in Illinois, and the reason we established our outstanding cardiac care center.

It's a fact that every minute treatment for cardiac arrest is delayed, it increases the likelihood of mortality by 10 percent. If they must wait just five minutes in cardiac arrest for a freight train to pass, their chance of mortality increases by 50 percent. This is to say nothing of the fact that emergency services may be barred from even reaching some citizens, who'll now find themselves literally on the wrong side of the tracks.

Approximately one-third of all EMS runs coming to Good Shepherd originated on the other side of the EJ&E tracks. A trauma patient has what's called the "golden hour," from the time of significant injury to treatment. This is the window of opportunity when their chances of survival are best. Delay in getting our patients to the hospital, as well as delay in getting our physician specialists to the hospital puts our patients' lives at risk.

The Canadian National's plans represent a significant public health and safety threat to Barrington and its neighboring communities.